

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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P 041345Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5082

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 NOUAKCHOTT 0273

EXDIS

FOR INR DIRECTOR SAUNDERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MR MO AG SS

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON PROJECTED INR ANALYSIS: ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN
CONFLICT OVER NEXT THREE YEARS

REF: STATE 18996

1. WHILE IT MIGHT BE GREAT FUN FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETERS SOUTH OF THE LOCUS OF THE PRIME RIVALRY AND WHO ARE UNENCUMBERED WITH FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE TO SPECULATE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR AND PROBABLE DURATION OF THE ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN CONFLICT, IT IS LESS CLEAR THAT THE PRODUCT OF THIS INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE WOULD BE ESPECIALLY USEFUL. THE COURSE OF ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN RELATIONS CAN BE SEEN ONLY DIMLY FROM NOUAKCHOTT. EVEN MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT WHOSE VIEW INTO THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT (AND PERHAPS INTO ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT AS WELL) IS SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN THIS MISSION'S CHARACTERIZES QUESTION OF ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN SHOOTING WAR AS BIGGEST UNKNOWN IN ENTIRE SAHARA QUESTION. BY SAME TOKEN IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO PREDICT SHAPE ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN CONFLICT MAY TAKE, EXCEPT IN GENERAL, CATEGORICAL TERMS, AND HENCE TO ATTEMPT TO FORESEE IMPACT OF MAGHREB CONFLICT ON MAURITANIA OR ON US INTERESTS. BUT WITH THOSE CAVEATS AND WITHIN PARAMETERS IMPOSED BY DISTANCE FROM PROBLEM, FOLLOWING ARE OUR COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS ON PROPOSITIONS CONTAINED REFTEL.

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2. IN ORDER TO WEIGH IMPACT ON MAURITANIA OF HOSTILE ACTION UNDERTAKEN BY ALGERIA AGAINST MOROCCO, WE MUST POSIT FOUR POSSIBLE TYPES OF ALGERIAN EFFORT SHORT OF HEAD-ON MILITARY CLASH: (ONE) ACTIONS INSIDE MOROCCO TO SUBVERT MONARCHY, DEPOSE KING, AND INSTALL ARAB SOCIALIST AND PROBABLY MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT; (TWO) POLITICAL AND PROPAGANDA PRESSURE MOUNTED THROUGH EVERY AVAILABLE ORGANIZATION AND MEDIUM, (UN, OAU, ARAB LEAGUE); AD HOC INTERNATIONAL GROUPS OR FRONTS; ALL ALGERIAN AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND PROPAGANDA CHANNELS; (THREE) ECONOMIC WAREFARE AIMED AT DISRUPTING DOMESTIC ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE; (FOUR) INDIRECT MILITARY ACTION--PRINCIPALLY SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF POLISARIO, BUT UTILIZING ANY OTHER PROXIES WHICH MIGHT COME ALONG (CUBANS ARE CURRENTLY BEING TOUTED AS MOST PROBABLE CANDIDATES), AND ENLISTING ANY OTHER MILITANTS (LIBYANS, RADICAL PALESTINIANS) WHO MIGHT MAKE EFFECTIVE IF TEMPORARY ALLIES.

3. ALGERIAN ATTEMPTS TO SUBVERT CHERIFIAN MONARCHY, SO LONG AS THEY ARE IN FACT FOCUSED ON AND CONFINED TO MOROCCO, WOULD NOT AFFECT MAURITANIA. DITTO ANY ECONOMIC WAREFARE MEASURES MOUNTED AGAINST MOROCCAN INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL TRADE, PRODUCTION, OR DISTRIBUTION. HOWEVER, VIGOROUSLY HOSTILE POLITICAL/PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST MOROCCO WOULD INEVITABLY SPILL OVER ON TO MAURITANIA AND OULD DADDAH REGIME, AS COMBINED GOA/POLISARIO EFFORT AT RECENT OAU LIBERATION COMMITTEE MEETING HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED. WHETHER SPILL OVER WOULD REPRESENT MERE ANNOYANCE OR WOULD CONSTITUTE REAL AND SUBSTANTIAL THREAT TO MAURITANIA OR TO REGIME CAN ONLY BE ADJUDGED IN CONTEXT OF SPECIFIC POLITICAL OR PROPAGANDA EFFORT. INDIRECT MILITARY ACTION, IF CONFINED TO DIRECTION AND SUPPORT OF PROXY ATTACKS ON MOROCCAN ARMED FORCES, POLICE AND CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATORS IN MOROCCO OR IN MOROCCAN SAHARA, WILL NOT AFFECT MAURITANIA.

4. BUT FORM QUESTIONS ARE POSED REFTEL OBSCURES REALITIES OF CURRENT SITUATION. GOA HAS ALREADY ENLARGED ITS LONGSTANDING ANTI-HASSAN POSTURE TO INCLUDE MAURITANIA
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AND OULD DADDAH GOVERNMENT. GOA'S SAHARA POLITICAL EFFORT BEGAN TO TAKE ON ANTI-MAURITANIAN CAST OVER AND ABOVE ITS BASIC ANTI-MOROCCAN THRUST DURING 29TH GA. ALGERIAN INTERVENTIONS IN ICJ PROCESS UCD ITS POLITICAL/PROPAGANDA EFFORT DURING 30TH GA DISCUSSIONS OF SAHARA WERE AIMED AT GIRM AS WELL AS GOM. GOA LAUNCHED VIGOROUS AND SOMETIMES VICIOUS PROPAGANDA ATTACK ON MAURITANIA AND REGIME LEADERSHIP EARLY IN DECEMBER.

GOA HAS ALREADY HIT MAURITANIA WITH NUMBER OF HOSTILE ECONOMIC ACTIONS, INCLUDING FLOODING COUNTRY WITH BOGUS BANKNOTES. NOFE INFLICTED PERMANENT DAMAGE, BUT TOTALITY WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO REMIND GIRM ECONOMIC MANAGERS HOW VULNERABLE MAURITANIA IS TO ALGERIAN ECONOMIC PRESSURES. ABOVE ALL, ALGERIANS AND POLISARIO HAVE CLEARLY DIRECTED MAJOR IF NOT THEIR PRINCIPAL GUERRILLA EFFORT AT THE WEAK, UNDER-EQUIPPED, LARGELY UNTRAINED, AND TOTALLY INEXPERIENCED MAURITANIAN FORCES (ARMY, GENDARMERIE, AND NATIONAL GUARD ASSEMBLED INTO COMBINED COMBAT TEAMS) CLEARLY WITH OBJECTIVE OF QUICKLY KNOCKING MAURITANIANS OUT OF THE SAHARA EQUATION. LARGER-SCALE AND MORE DRAMATIC ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN MILITARY CLASHES (E.G. AMGHALA) HAVE TENDED TO OBSCURE THE CONTINUING PUNISHMENT THE ALGERIFOSIPAVE BEEN METING OUT TO MAURITANIAN FORCES ON ALMOST DAILY BAIS (UNTIL THIS MOST RECENT FLURRY OF ARAB MEDIATION EFFORTS). IN PERCENTAGE TERMS (PERCENTAGE OF MILITARY EFFECTIVES, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5083

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POPULATION) MAURITANIAN CASUALTIES MAY WELL HAVE BEEN HEAVIER THAN MOROCCAN.

5. THUS THE QUESTION AS SEEN FROM CAPITAL OF THE SMALLEST AND WEAKEST OF THE SAHARA PLAYERS IS NOT RPT NOT WHETHER THE ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN CONFRONTATION IS GOING TO CONTINUE OVER THE NEXT TWO OR THREE YEARS (THAT IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION), BUT WHETHER PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE IS RESOLVED TO CONTINUE HIS DETERMINED

ATTACK ON MAURITANIA UNTIL HE BRINGS DOWN HASSAN.

6. "WHAT IS LIKELIHOOD THAT GIRM WILL CALL FOR OR WELCOME SOVIET INVOLVEMENT?" NONE WHATSOEVER. GIRM SEES SOVIETS AS PRINCIPAL SUPPLIER AND SUPPORTER OF THEIRNLRQRIAN/POLISARIO ATTACKERS. AS CONSEQUENCES OF SOVIET-CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA AND TO LESSER EXTENT OF SOVIET ROLE IN SAHARA ISSUE, MAURITANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE PERHAPS MORE STRAINED NOW THAN AT POSSIBLY ANY TIME SINCE USSR VETOED MAURITANIAN UN MEMBERSHIP BID.

7. AMBASSADORS NEUMANN AND PARKER ARE IN FAR BETTER POSITION TO PREDICT AND WEIGH IMPACT OF ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN CONFLICT ON US INTERESTS. IMPACT OF ALGERIAN-MAURITANIAN CONFLICT ON US INTERESTS WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER, HOW VIGOROUSLY, AND IN WHAT FASHION OR CONTEXT THE US DECIDES TO ESCALATE ITS SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIA BEYOND TWO FAVORABLE UN VOTES. ANY US DECISION TO
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PROVIDE SUBSTANTIAL AND PUBLIC, POLITICAL OR MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR GIRM'S SAHARA EFFORT, PARTICULARLY IF OUR SUPPORT DULLS OR DEFLECTS AN ALGERIAN THRUST, WILL GENERATE THE SAME SORT OF STATIC IN ALGIERS THAT OUR NEUTRALITY IN FAVOR OF RABAT HAS PRODUCED.HANDYSIDE

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